

2006 INNOVATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

APPLICATION

Deadline: March 4, 2006

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete and submit this document electronically if possible, preferably in Microsoft Word format (.doc or rtf). This application is also available at www.csg.org, in the Programs section. Determine the appropriate "Change Driver" from the enclosed matrix and indicate that in the appropriate space listed below. Keep in mind that the matrix is only meant to show potential relationships between change drivers, trends and issues, and is not exhaustive. **Be advised that CSG reserves the right to use or publish in other CSG products and services the information that you provide in this Innovations Awards Program Application. If you object to CSG potentially using or publishing the information contained in this application in other CSG products and services, please advise us in a separate attachment to your program's application.**

ID #: 06-W-13UT

**Change Driver: Role of Government
State: Utah**

1. **Program Name: Utah Clicks/Universal Application System**
2. **Administering Agency:** Utah Department of Health
3. **Contact Persons (Name and Title):** Adrienne Akers, Senior Researcher, Utah State University and Lois Bloebaum, Reproductive Health Program Manager, Utah Department of Health
4. **Address:** Center for Persons with Disabilities, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-6580
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7. **E-mail Address:** Adrienne Akers Akersa@eiri.usu.edu and Lois Bloebaum lbloebaum@utah.gov
8. **Web site Address:** www.utahclicks.org
9. **Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.**
Based on technology called the Universal Application System (UAS), Utah Clicks is a web-based interagency application process designed to help families apply for multiple programs. Families can complete paperwork online in a non-duplicative manner and submit their applications electronically to participating programs, such as Medicaid, WIC, CHIP, Head Start and others.
10. **How long has this program been operational (month and year)?**
Utah Clicks was developed as part of a four-year Maternal and Child Health Bureau grant (2001-05). After being piloted in several communities, Utah Clicks was launched statewide in May 2005 and continues to be used with great success.

11. Why was the program created? What problem was it designed to address?

Families of young children, especially when the child has special needs, often have difficulty finding services and resources for their children. In some states, many families fall through the cracks of a complex, disconnected system while in other states, little connection exists among those few services available. This causes additional frustration for families already dealing with significant emotional strain. In the technologically advanced society in which we live, it is unbelievable that so few state systems of health and human services have taken on the collective challenge to create an integrated approach for ensuring and providing services through a streamlined process for families.

As a change driver, improving access to health, education and human services for consumers is deeply embedded in the **role of government**. Likewise, technologies such as the UAS could be applied to other areas of state government that require consumers and businesses to fill out multiple forms that require duplicative information. The UAS could be expanded to facilitate e-government across a broad spectrum.

12. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

The Universal Application System (UAS) is a web-based interagency application process designed to help families apply for multiple programs. Because the UAS allows families to complete and submit paperwork online for multiple programs, the need to visit multiple offices is minimized and administrative costs across state programs can be minimized. To complete the UAS, the consumer is first asked a series of screening questions. Based on their responses, programs for which they may be eligible are suggested by the UAS. The consumer then chooses those programs for which they wish to apply. The UAS collects application information but does not determine absolute eligibility—this responsibility remains with each program. Depending on how many programs the family applies for, the entire application process is usually completed in less than one hour. Questions are compiled together from all selected applications and displayed to the consumer by topic. Thus, the consumer sees and answers groups of related questions, e.g. family demographics, health questions, income questions, rather than answering questions related to specific applications and ***no question is asked more than once***. After submitting an application, consumers can later view the status of their application and view notes made by the intake worker. Most importantly, the UAS is confidential and protected by a user name and password created by and under control of the consumer.

In addition to the application process, the UAS provides a secure area where electronically submitted applications can be retrieved by intake workers or other designated staff. This area, called the Eligibility Staging Area, provides an interface where eligibility workers and office managers can view applications, assign applications to intake workers, and insert notes for themselves or ones that the consumer can view, view the history of an application, and archive applications as needed. Dynamic reports provide local office and state program managers with the daily progress of applications, compare statistics by year, and even see the distribution of submitted applications by office.

Consumer benefits provided by the UAS are that it 1) streamlines the application process and avoids duplication of effort; 2) minimizes time and transportation costs to obtain and submit paper-based applications; 3) is available 24/7; 4) is available in English and Spanish.

13. What were the program's start-up costs?

The original MCHB federal grant provided \$150,000/year for four years. Approximately half of these funds went into the development of the Utah Clicks technology. Based on the results of the initial pilot study, an additional \$60,000 enabled programmers to make adjustments and add new features that were identified by the users during the pilot study.

Currently, the UAS is being adopted in Oregon and Indiana via contracts. The cost of the modifications was negotiated with each state and is based on contract requirements unique to each state. Several other states, such as New Mexico, Arizona, Missouri, Florida, Washington and Kansas, are in various stages of negotiation to adopt the UAS.

14. **What are the program's annual operational costs?** The cost to operate six Utah programs (Medicaid, WIC, Children's Special Health Care Needs Program, Baby Watch Early Intervention and Baby Your Baby) via Utah Clicks is \$50,000. Because this is the first year following the launch to Utah Clicks, costs to add additional programs are not included in this estimate. In other states, the initial start up costs and licensing are negotiated on a state-by-state basis; annual maintenance costs would range from \$30,000 to \$60,000 based on the nature of the agreement.
15. **How is the program funded?** Originally funded via a Maternal and Child Health Bureau grant, participating programs in Utah (e.g. Medicaid, WIC, etc.) contribute a portion of the annual funds needed to maintain Utah Clicks. As the UAS developer, Utah State University agreed to host the original version of the project and negotiations are now being made for the Utah Information Technology branch to take over as host to the program.
16. **Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations?** Not as yet. However, adoption of the Utah Clicks system in other states would benefit from a stable funding stream to ensure the success of the program.
17. **What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?** From the administrative standpoint, the UAS is a server-based technology and requires server-grade computer hardware to operate. The UAS is written in a language called ColdFusion, which is a web scripting language developed by Macromedia (now Adobe). PostgreSQL is an open source database technology that manages the storage and retrieval of data for the UAS. Both technologies can be installed on a Windows or Linux based server operating system. Additionally, Adobe Acrobat Standard is used for the conversion of application forms into PDF format and for adding fields on the application to hold data in the appropriate areas of the application. From the consumer standpoint, no specialized equipment or software is needed--the only requirement for use is a computer with internet access. As noted in Question 21 below, consumers are most likely to apply for programs via Utah Clicks from locations *other than state offices*.
18. **To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state?**
The Universal Application System is copyrighted through Utah State University by the original developers: Richard Roberts, Adrienne Akers, Chris Schofield and Terry Russo.
19. **Are you aware of similar programs in other states?**
The states of Pennsylvania and Texas both offer an online application/submission process. It is our understanding that the costs of developing and implementing both of those state systems are significantly higher than the UAS. Additionally, the UAS has a consumer-friendly look and feel not demonstrated in similar systems from other states.
20. **Has the program been fully implemented?**
Utah Clicks was launched in Utah in May 2005 and is available to all families statewide. A survey connected with Utah Clicks indicates that only 2% of consumers using Utah Clicks actually go into agency offices to use the system. With only word-of-mouth publicity during the initial 5-month period, approximately 600 applications were submitted via Utah Clicks. In October 2005, two newspaper articles introduced Utah Clicks to the public, giving only slightly more visibility. Nonetheless, during the second 5-month period, 4600 applications have been submitted via Utah Clicks, which is a 780% increase in usage! Clearly, families are able to find and use an automated interagency application process made available by a state.

21. Briefly evaluate the program’s effectiveness in addressing the defined problem or issue.

As part of the Utah Clicks application process, a brief consumer survey is included. Surprisingly, most consumers used Utah Clicks to apply for services from the following locations (note the extremely low number who actually applied from at “state agency” office): 62% applied from home; 17% work; 10% from friend or family’s home; 8% at a library, school, <2% from a state agency office.

Even more surprising was the result that 97% of users indicated that they would recommend Utah Clicks to other families. The following open-ended comments were typical: 1) It was pretty easy to complete; 2) I think its great that these opportunities are available to help out people who need help; 3) Nice to be able to get it all done online; 4) The HELP comments could give more detailed explanation. This last comment indicates that consumers can and will offer useful recommendations to improve the system.

22. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

Initially, the UAS/Utah Clicks was piloted in three Utah communities to better understand what would be most useful to both families and service/benefit providers. As a result of the pilot study, enhancements on how to make it more useful were implemented and the go-ahead from the Utah Department of Health to create the electronic submission process was received. Utah Clicks is now in full production in Utah. It should be noted that Utah Clicks is not intended to replace paper-pencil applications completely but offers interested consumers a streamlined process for filling out and submitting paperwork to multiple programs.

23. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

One concern raised by some state-level staff is the usage and availability of the internet to families, especially those living in rural areas. A recent study from the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 62% of rural dwellers have internet access in comparison with 70% of urban consumers. The increasing use of the internet by consumers can no longer be denied.

The beauty of the UAS technology is that consumers are able find and apply for multiple programs/services with very minimal publicity and administrative support. The bigger challenge is to identify collaborative state leaders who recognize the long-term value of streamlining the application process for families/consumers and who are also willing to support the acquisition of systems such as the UAS both programmatically and fiscally. In other words, the human challenges outweigh the technological challenges. However, as is being demonstrated in Utah, Oregon and Indiana, the right mix of technology, agencies, and funding demonstrate that these obstacles can and will be overcome.

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